

A Structure and Fabricating Method of Optic Protection Film

1. Field of the Invention:

The invention relates to a structure and fabricating method of optic protection film that provides anti-static and anti-glare function. In particular, the invention relates to a plastic substrate structure comprising conductive particles and tiny particles in different size so as to achieve the foregoing functions.

10 2. Background of the Invention:

Glass substrate or transparent plastic substrate is one of the essential elements in flat display, and wherein the transparent plastic substrate surpasses the glass substrate in lighter weight and uneasy blowout etc. But the plastic substrate still has its weakness, such as adsorbing the dust easily because of static electricity. To take liquid crystal display as an example, traditional Simple Matrix liquid crystal display (SM-LCD), whose structure is shown in FIG. 1, comprises (from top to bottom) a hard coating layer 13, a conductive layer 12, a protection film 11, a polaroid 10, a glass substrate 30, a row electrode 50, a liquid crystal layer 80, a column electrode 60, a dichroic filter 70, a glass substrate 40, a polarizing filter 20, a protection film 21, a conductive layer 22, a hard coating layer 23. FIG. 1 shows that the liquid crystal molecule is located between the row electrode 50 and the column electrode 60 and is driven to turn by the exteriorly provided driving voltage. But some problems may be occurred in SM-LCD such as (1) cross-talk accomplished with the increase of scan electron (2) charges accumulation, electro field interference, and liquid crystal operating issue that happens in the top and bottom polaroids. So in the manufacturing process of polaroid, protection film and release film will be pasted in both top and bottom sides respectively. The function of the protection film is to protect the film surface of the polarizing filter, avoiding damage in the manufacturing or delivering. And the release film is used to carry on the sticking protection before panels are plastered. When the protection film is being torn, the film surface will accumulate static electricity because of rub,

and then the remained static electricity will attract the foreign body; on the other hand, when release film is being torn in manufacturing process, it will also produce the static electricity accumulation, which will not only attract the foreign body but also result in deviation in the matching process of panel
5 plastering, which effects the process yield. Therefore, the anti-static anti-glare film (ASAG film) is designed to solve these issues. The ASAG film on the whole contains three layer constructions as described previously, which are a hard coating layer 13, a conductive layer 12, and a protection film 11.

10 In the anti-static technology, sputtering method also can be used to form conductive layers. It can produce more uniform grain size particles, better adhesion with substrate, and better optic character. But because the process needs to proceed in a vacuum chamber, there are still disadvantages that the equipment cost is very high and that the film of raw material is not easy to
15 operate in such a vacuum chamber. There is another way to form the conductive layer that uses the wet coating method, which is a two-layer coating method enclosed by Dai Nippon Printing Co., as shown in US patent 6,146,753, forming a transparent conductive layer and a hard coating layer successively on the transparent protection film (abbreviated as "plastic
20 substrate" hereafter). Wherein the conductive layer contains conductive particles of antimony TiN oxide (ATO) or indium TiN oxide (ITO); its surface impedance is $\leq 10^8 \Omega/\square$ and can reduce the electrostatic generation. The increased conductive layer can reduce the surface impedance to $10^6 \Omega/\square \sim 10^7 \Omega/\square$ or so, so as to prevent a great deal of static
25 electricity creation. Because the consideration of the transmittance, generally the thickness is about $5\mu\text{m}$. The conductive layer is not hard enough, easily falling off when colliding, so it needs to coat a hardened resin to strengthen. Moreover, because the hardened resin has no electric conductivity, it needs to add conductive particles to extend the conductivity
30 and remove the accumulation charges. However the conductive metal particles are very expensive, which greatly raises the coating cost and the difficulty of manufacturing.

The hard coating layer is coated with the mixture of hardened resin and

conductive metal particles; the hardened resin provides the basic requirement of hardness, and the conductive metal particles provide the electric conductivity between the coated surface and the conductive layer. If
5 can be added with nano-level tiny particles, which can scatter the incident light to provide the anti-glare function.

The present invention is to aim at the necessary of the plastic substrate to provide an optic protection film with anti-static and anti-glare function, solving the foregoing fabrication issues.

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Summary of the Invention

The major objective of the present invention is to provide a fabrication method of an optic protection film, which is to add some conductive
15 particles to attain the anti-static function when forming the conductive layer onto the plastic substrate.

Another objective of the present invention is to provide a fabrication method of an optic protection film, which is to add some tiny particles so as to attain the function anti-glare when forming the conductive layer onto the
20 plastic substrate.

The other objective of the present invention is to provide a structure of an optic protection film, which has better hardness and better adhesion with plastic substrate.

First, a plastic substrate, the material of which is Cellulose Triacetate or
25 polyester, is selected, and then a conductive layer is formed on the plastic substrate. The conductive layer is a double-layer resin film structure made of two kinds of different resins. In the beginning, some conductive particles, which have two different grain sizes, are melted into resin A to enhance the conductive effect of resin A. The resin A that contained conductive particles
30 is coated on the substrate by wet coating method. Then the most alcohol in resin A is evaporated in the hot bake step so as to fasten the resin A; the thickness of resin A is less than the bigger grain size conductive particles in

resin A after hot bake. And then polymer in resin A can process polymerization to strengthen the structure by thermosetting or ultraviolet light curing method. Next, some smaller SiO₂ particles are added into resin B that has better hardness to attain the anti-glare function. The resin B
5 contained tiny particles is coated on the resin A and fills all the gaps between the conductive particles. Then resin B is strengthened in the hot bake and thermosetting or ultraviolet curing step. At this time, because the grain size of the conductive particles is larger, at least the upper rims of the partial bigger conductive particles can touch to or expose in the exterior of the
10 upper surface of resin B so as to prevent charges accumulating in resin B and to attain the anti-static effect. Thus, the optic protection film with anti-static and anti-glare function is accomplished.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a sectional view of the traditional SM-LCD.

Fig. 2A is a sectional view of the plastic substrate according to the embodiment of the present invention.

20 Fig. 2B is a sectional view of the conductive particles according to the embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2C is a sectional view of the conductive layer with anti-glare function according to the embodiment of the present invention.

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Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention mainly is to provide the function of electricity conductivity and anti-static by adding at least two kinds of different size conductive particles, that is, some bigger conductive particles and some
30 smaller conductive particles, into resin A that comprises the conductive layer.

Wherein, the thickness of solidified resin A is larger than the grain size of the conductive particles of smaller grain size, however less than that of the conductive particles of bigger grain size. Resin B is composed of the relatively high hardness material, coated on resin A to be a hard coating
5 layer. Moreover, in the foregoing conductive particles of bigger grain size, at least the upper rims of partial bigger conductive particles can touch to or expose in the exterior of the upper surface of resin B, contacting the external environment. So resin B need not to add extra conductive metal particles anymore, but the charges of resin A can be released to the exterior, avoiding
10 accumulating in resin B; such can attain the anti-static function, simplify the fabrication process, and reduce the cost.

To elaborate the key points of the present invention, the present invention will take the protection film of flat panel fabrication as an embodiment matched with corresponding drawings.

First, shown in Fig. 2A is a plastic substrate 100, the material of which can be cellulose, diacetate, triacetate, cellulose acetate butyrate, polyester, polyamide, polyimide, polyether sulfone, polysulfone, polypropylene, polymethylpentene, polyvinyl chloride, polyvinyl acetal, polyether ketone, methyl polymethacrylate, polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), polycarbonate, and polyurethane. Wherein, the better material is cellulose triacetate (TAC) and Poly-Ethylene (PET). The mentioned TAC or PET is a familiar substrate material in commerce, for example Fuji and Konica etc. all provide such kinds of substrate.
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Next is going to start the key point of the present invention to form a conductive layer 200 on plastic substrate 100. The conductive layer 200 is a double-layer structure including: a thin film layer of resin A contained conductive particles to provide better conductivity, and a thin film layer of resin B that is relatively harder and can be a hard coat layer. The formation of this conductive layer 200 can be divided into two steps: depositing or
25 coating conductive particles 200 and resin A on substrate 100, then forming tiny particles 230 and resin B onto the foregoing. The detail embodiment
30 steps are described below. As shown in Fig. 2B, firstly, the conductive particles 220 are mixed into resin A, which is mainly composed of 1-Butanol, Ethanol, Ethyl acetate (EAC), Hexane, isopropanol (IPA) 80%,
35 and partial acrylic resin; the solid content of resin A is 5~25%. The weight

percentage of conductive particles 200 to resin A is among 5~30%, and the conductive particles 200 have two sizes: the bigger grain size (the diameter is about 0.5~7 μm) and the smaller grain size (the diameter is about 0.1~0.5 μm). Wherein the conductive particles of bigger grain size account 5 for 0.5~10% in the conductive particles 200 and the conductive particles of smaller grain size account for 90~99.5%. The conductive particles 200 can be composed of antimony tin oxide (ATO) or indium-tin oxide (ITO). The resin A that contains at least two kinds conductive particles 220 of different grain size is coated on the substrate 100 to form a 5 μm thin film by wet 10 coating method; wherein the method of wet coating can be spin coating, roll coating, gravure coating, bar coating, and slot die coating etc. As shown in Fig. 2B, the resin A of the embodiment in the present invention will become thinner after the solidification steps of hot bake and ultraviolet light curing, and thus will not cover all the conductive particles. Relatively, the thickness 15 of resin A after the solidification processing is merely larger than the conductive particles of smaller grain size but less than the conductive particles of bigger grain size, making all the bigger grain size conductive particles protruding at least some portions to the exterior of the upper surface of the solidified resin A layer (as shown in Fig. 2B). The conductive 20 particles 220 composed of ATO (or ITO) are used to be the conductive elements of conductive layer in the traditional structure. In addition to adding ATO (or ITO) particles of the original grain size (about 0.1~0.5 μm), like traditional fabrication process, the present invention even adds some extra ATO (or ITO) particles of bigger grain size (about 0.5~7 μm). Under 25 the premise keeping the original conductivity, the present invention uses the ATO particles of bigger grain size to fill and bridge vertically between resin A and resin B, making the resin B still have the anti-static function without adding any conductive particles. This method can prevent the drawback in the prior art that extra conductive metal particles need to be added into hard 30 coating layer to avoid the charge accumulation, and can reduce the difficulty of fabrication process and cost.

Further, the thermal curing of solidification is processing, which is to evaporate the most portion of alcohol in resin A in the hot bake step so as to fasten resin A. The temperature of hot bake is among 50~95°C, and the hot 35 bake time is about 0.5~5min. The temperature of the hot bake depends on what kinds of solvent is used in resin A, and needs to be lower than the

boiling point of the solvent. In this embodiment, the solvent can be isopropanol, so the temperature of hot bake is about 60°C. Next, ultraviolet light is used to make the polymer in resin A proceed polymerization of cross-link to strengthen the structure; wherein, the intensity of ultraviolet 5 light is among 150~1000 mJ/cm², and the thickness of the resin A after solidified is about 0.5~2μm.

Further, 1~3 wt% silicon oxide (silica) tiny particles 230, in nano level, are added into resin B and stirred by homogenizer; the grain size of silica tiny particles 230 is among 0.1~1.0μm. The solid content of resin B is 10 45~50%, and its major content is acrylic resin; after the solidification process, resin B can get better hardness and thus be used as a hard coating layer. The silica tiny particles 230 will cluster upward in the process of solidification and of resin B coating because of their buoyancy. So when 15 incident light is entering, the tiny particles, which are in the surface of the most outer layer (resin B layer), can scatter the incident light to irregular directions and attain the anti-glare effect. The resin B contained tiny particles 230 is formed onto resin A by wet coating method, and fill all the gaps between conductive particles 220 to perform an about 10μm thin film; the tiny particles 230 will float in the surface neighborhood of resin B 20 because of their buoyancy to exert the anti-glare function. Wherein, the wet coating method can be the same as or different to the coating method of resin A. Next step is solidification, which evaporates the most solvent in resin B to fasten resin B by hot bake method; the temperature of hot bake is among 50~95°C and the process time is 0.5~5min. Then ultraviolet light is 25 used to make the polymer in resin B proceed polymerization of cross-link so as to strengthen the structure; wherein, the intensity of ultraviolet light is among 150~1000 mJ/cm², and the thickness of resin B after solidified is about 4~5μm.

Thus the conductive layer 200 of such formation will has the function 30 of hard coating protection, anti-static, and anti-glare etc., and the conductive particles 220 make conductive layer 200, whether resin A film or resin B film, possess the static electricity removing function. The hardness of resin B is high enough to protect conductive layer 200 and substrate 100, and can provide the effect of hard coating layer in tradition fabrication. Moreover, 35 The present invention can be applied to the surface optic film of flat panel

displays (such as LCD, PDA, PDP, NOTE-PC, CRT etc.). The anti-glare and anti-static functions of this optic film can satisfy the requirement of LCD panel manufacturers who demand the anti-static raw material, and can reduce the dust absorbing in flat panel displays to increase the comfort of
5 users.

In summary, the present invention is to add at least two kinds conductive particles of different grain size into resin A. Wherein the grain size of the bigger conductive particles is not only larger than the thickness of resin A after solidified but even also equal to or larger than the total
10 thickness of resin A and resin B after solidified. At least the upper rims of partial bigger conductive particles can touch to or expose in the exterior of the upper surface of resin B, contacting the external environment. So the resin B used to be a hard coating layer will not need to add conductive metal particles, but still can remove the charges in resin A film to the external
15 environment, avoiding charge accumulating in resin B and attaining the anti-static function. Therefore, compared with the prior arts (such as US patent 6,146,753), which need to add conductive particles in hard coating layer and thus result in the increasing of cost and the difficulty of fabrication,
20 the present invention can simplify the fabrication process and reduce the cost.

However, the above description is only the preferable embodiment of the invention and cannot be used as a limitation for the scope of implementation of the invention. Any variation and modification made from the scopes claimed from the invention all should be included within the
25 scope of the present invention, and hope your esteemed reviewing committee member examine this application favorably and permit it as a patent wishfully.